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AURA'S IMPULSES

OR
PRINCIPLE A SAFER GUIDE
THAN FEELING



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“ I M A G E S ! I M A G E S ! ” page 26

LAURA'S IMPULSES;

OR,

Principle a Safer Guide than Feeling.

"Teach me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see,
And what I do in any thing
To do it as for thee."

Herbert.

London:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW.

EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1881.

1489 f 17.



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LAURA'S IMPULSES.

CHAPTER I.

NANCY DOW.

“YES,” said Laura, putting down her book,
“I am determined to be as kind and
as generous as this girl was. How delightful
to have everybody love you, and to be pleasant
all the time!”

And Miss Laura looked rather ashamed; for
she remembered that she had all the morning
been complaining of the weather, and had
thought it very hard that, in the vacation, when
she wished so much to enjoy herself, she must
be shut up at home by the rain.

A beautiful rain it was, too, such as makes
the grass grow, and the ground smell so sweetly

that perfumers have tried to extract this charm of freshly turned earth for ladies, who sometimes like the odour of flowers better than the flowers themselves, or, at least, than the care of them.

Yes, and besides all this, she had been very much provoked with her sister for mislaying some of her worsteds. And when she went into the kitchen, and offered to assist Bridget, everything had been in her way; and she treated the little Maltese kitten very roughly, for climbing up on her shoulder, as she had always been encouraged to do. So at last Bridget told her that "she had certainly got up wrong side out that morning," which only vexed her the more.

But there is true wisdom in tracing such evils as far back as Bridget did; for if the heart be lifted to God at the first waking moment, and his blessing and assistance sought, there will not be much murmuring and discontent through the day.

But Laura was determined to resemble Gertrude, whose story she had been reading with

intense interest. So eager was she for sympathy in the matter, that she went to her brother James, who was building "a first-rate clipper," as he called it, and was very busy with his pieces of wood.

"James, I am going to be just like this Gertrude; just so generous and kind, and never be provoked."

"O Laura! I guess you will! That is like your being so orderly all at once last summer, when cousin Ann was here. You saw her fold up everything, and keep her room and her work-box as neat as a pin, and you were going to do just the same. Now look! Here's a drawer!" and with that he gave a vigorous pull to a stand-drawer particularly appropriated to his sister's use.

Laura's face was crimsoned, and she rushed forward to prevent the exposure of calicoes, ribbons, papers, combs, knots of sewing silk, and a little of everything, which lay in motley confusion.

"You are the most teasing boy—the very worst I do believe—"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed James, swinging his miniature vessel triumphantly over his head. "You are the girl that is never to be provoked! You go off well at the first touch, like a true lucifer! don't you? You are always making resolutions and promises. The most '*promising*' girl of my acquaintance, decidedly!" And Master James might have gone on longer, gratifying his propensity to thoughtless and rather rough ridicule, particularly of what he considered girlish faults or follies, but Laura had closed the door with a slam, and retreated to her room.

"Everything is against me," she sobbed, throwing herself on the side of the bed. "I do try to be good. I do love beautiful characters. But as soon as I begin to do right, something always comes along to spoil it all."

Poor Laura! Something does come to draw out the evil within us, but that something does not *put* it there. It is only the test of the inner self.

But she did not like to examine into the cause of her failures. It was much more plea-

sant to let her imagination carry away her thoughts into fancied scenes, and promise her future good. So she dried her tears, took a book, and was soon lost in its contents. Her mind was thus employed, and her feelings enlisted without the necessity of action, the danger of temptation, or the pain of disappointment; and this was her common mode of solace, whenever conscience wanted to whisper a few unpleasant truths. Presently a noise in the street caused her to look out, and seeing James engaged there, she closed her book; and still intent on her purpose of being generous and kind (although she had failed in point of temper), she took some work, and went to her mother's sewing-room.

Mrs. Dow, the seamstress, who was engaged that day in making garments for some of the family, she knew to be very destitute. She was a widow with three children. The oldest was a wild boy, who, having lost a father's guidance, had been suffered to stroll about the streets too much, and had given her a great deal of trouble, while the youngest, a crippled

and sickly child at home, demanded all her care. Ah! the needle is a feeble instrument to supply so many and such urgent wants.

Laura seated herself, and determined to cheer her and light up her pale and care-worn face by a little sympathy, she asked her all about her family. Mrs. Dow had little to say of John; for the mother's heart does for her own what the charity of the world fails to do—passes as silently as possible over failings. She spoke of Mary's industry, and the care she took of home in her own absence; and of little Nancy, who was so fond of her books, and who sometimes threw her arms around her mother, and hiding her face in her bosom, would burst into tears, saying, "Oh, I shall always be a dunce! O mother, if I could go to school!" "Miss Laura," she added, "she would take so to learning, if she were only able to go and sit in school. But, poor dear, she cannot; so she reads her few books over and over again, and always has them put where she can reach them. Some one gave

her a slate and pencil lately, and she delights to write and draw."

"O Mrs. Dow, I will give her a nice drawing-book and some drawing materials. The book is all arranged so beautifully; it begins with very simple patterns, and goes on to others; and there are some quite pretty pictures in the last part. She can draw them very easily. I will get some books for her, too." And she rose at once very eagerly to go for them.

"Come here, Laura," said her mother; and she whispered, "Do you remember that you have promised that drawing-book to Jane Manning?"

"Oh, well," said Laura, "it is no matter. I can buy her another, some time."

"But, my dear, there are no drawing-books precisely like this one in town; and she will be disappointed."

"But I am sure she does not need it so much as Nancy Dow, and I want to give it to her," said Laura, to whom the fulfilment of a promise was not half so attractive as the last

fresh impulse. And how many, like her, prefer making presents to paying debts !

“ Well, my dear,” said the yielding mother, “ you must settle it with Jane. I remember that it was your own proposal to give it to her, and she seemed very much delighted.”

Laura hesitated, but the present feeling gained the ascendancy ; and she went to the bookcase and took out the drawing-book, and laid it by Mrs. Dow’s work, saying she would go upstairs and hunt up some other books. The seamstress looked embarrassed. With true delicacy, she had not listened to the low conversation between Mrs. Marshall and Laura, but she could not help thinking that it related to the intended gift. Hesitatingly she said,—

“ Do not mind what I said about Nancy, Miss Laura. Any little thing will please her ; and you can ask your mother some other time if there is any trifle which you have done using that she can spare, in the way of a picture or book of any sort.”

“ Oh no, Mrs. Dow, you must take this. I want Nancy to have the drawing-book, and

mother does not object to it ; do you, mother ? She only thought that another person might expect it, perhaps ; but she is not lame, and I can find something else for her, when I see her," and she ran out of the room.

"I would be very glad that she should give it to your little girl ; but Laura is very impulsive and apt to forget her promises, and I reminded her that she had promised this very book to Jane Manning. But she may do as she pleases."

This was a very customary mode with Mrs. Marshall of settling affairs that did not affect her own conscience especially. She often laughed at Laura's resolutions, sudden impulses, and short-lived schemes, without examining the right or the wrong of them. Yet she had that season a beautiful white and scarlet fuchsia which budded in large clusters, that fell off, one by one, without coming to perfection ; and she was very anxious to know the cause of the defect. Was it in the soil, or from too much water, or too little sun, or any insect which ate away the bud at the stem ? What was it that

prevented the promised blossom? Yet these buds of feeling in her immortal child, which were continually falling off without any good result, passed with the mere superficial explanation of, "Oh, Laura is so impulsive." It is not asked why? It was not traced to the source "*whence* are the issues of life," neither was a remedy sought.

When Mrs. Dow finished her work and went away from Mrs. Marshall's, it was found that she had left the drawing-book behind her; perhaps accidentally, but more probably because she had some doubt whether the gift was altogether right.

"It is too bad; but I will carry it to Nancy in the morning."

The next day Laura gathered up several little books which she had done using—some which had lost a leaf or two, or were rather shabby, but would be a great deal better than none, she thought, for the poor cripple. And, truly, when she took them to Mrs. Dow the pale face of little Nancy flushed with joy, and she looked at one and then at another, and

valued them all, although Miss Laura herself could not taste the satisfaction of having furnished what had cost her any sacrifice.

Nancy had that morning been begging Mary to stay at home with her a little while. But Mary, after doing all in her power for her comfort, had kissed her, and said,—

“No; I must bind as many blankets as I can. You know I have only sixpence a pair for doing them, and we need so many things.”

So when the little girl answered “Come in” to Laura’s knock, she was very glad that some one had come to see her in her loneliness, and she began to urge Laura to stay as long as possible. But after the excitement of giving the presents, and hearing Nancy’s enthusiastic admiration of them, and her warm thanks, there was no particular gratification to her in staying. Nothing in the place or the child excited her any further.

Mrs. Dow’s room was scrupulously neat. There was no neglect to be seen, although she went out every week-day to sew, and Mary spent all the time she could in binding blankets.

But it was an old room, uncarpeted, except the strip of baize where Nancy sat, and one or two braided mats—the last use of worn-out woollen garments—which were put before the glass and at the door. The windows both looked upon the end of a block of buildings, and the view was not attractive.

The furniture was quite ordinary; the most conspicuous article being a tall clock, standing in one corner, with a face surmounted by a ruddy circular figure enclosing a man's face, which, if set at the time of the new moon, showed only a little crescent of light, but gradually one feature after another appeared, and then slowly disappeared with the decrease of the orb of night. There was a light stand with some books, a slate, and a few pictures, which was always set by the chair of the lame girl.

And we must not forget to mention that on a shelf was a Chinese box, a curious fan, and some pieces of coral; for they were carefully dusted every morning, and valued as treasures which "father brought home." There were

also two profiles cut out of paper, which were framed and suspended under the glass. These were likenesses of Mrs. Dow's father and mother, and excited surprise in her children that grandfather ever wore such a queerly-shaped collar, or grandmother such a bag behind her head.

"Do stay, Miss Laura; it is so pleasant to have some one here," said the social Nancy. "See, even my Maltese kitten seems to purr louder because you have come."

"I should like to stay, but I can't this morning." (That was a bright day, and she had plans of her own for it.) "I will come to-morrow and sit with you a long while."

"Oh, will you? I shall be so glad! To-day I will read my new books, and look at the drawing-book. I thank you ever so much for them. And do come to-morrow. Mary leaves me at eight o'clock in the morning, and the days are long here all alone. Mrs. Morgan's Jemmy comes in sometimes, but he soon gets tired, and he wants to handle everything, and I am afraid of his breaking the box and the

coral. Come early to-morrow, won't you? Do come."

"Yes, I will certainly come. Good-bye, Nancy;" and Laura went away, with the full intention of giving the child the pleasure she desired.

CHAPTER II.

A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE next morning Nancy was very enthusiastic and bright. She showed her mother again the presents she had displayed the night before, and told her again and again that Laura Marshall was coming to sit with her that day, and they would have such a good time.

"She will draw me pictures, and set me copies, and tell me all about her school—I know she will. And, mother, may I have my best muslin dress on? She does not come often, you know."

Mrs. Dow looked at her feeble child, sighed, and kissed her.

"Yes, my dear. I must go now, because I have a long distance to walk this morning, and

my day's work must be done. Mary may change your dress before she goes out, for your calico is faded. I hope John will stay in his new place, and we shall get you a spring dress soon."

Mrs. Dow closed the door, and then turned back.

"Do not urge Miss Laura to stay any longer than she likes with you. She has been very kind to call and see you, and to bring you the books. And you must not be disappointed if she should not come to-day; she has a great many things to"—amuse her, she was going to say—"take up her time, and perhaps she may be prevented from coming to-day."

"Oh no, mother; she *said* she would come, certainly come, so I shall see her."

Nine o'clock struck, and was followed by the other hours, when the factory bell rang at noon, and Mary hastened home to set out the bread and milk for dinner, and attend to her sister. She opened the door, and saw Nancy's head bowed down on her hands.

"She never came, Mary! I have looked for

her every minute ; tick, tick, tick, it has been all the forenoon, and I thought sometimes I wished she could hear our clock, it sounded so like, Come ! come ! ”

“ My dear sister must be patient. You have a great many pleasant things, and a great deal to thank God for, although ”—and her tone changed to one of deep sympathy—“ you are lame, and must often be lonely. Shall we pray to our Father who is in heaven to bless us ? ”

Without waiting for her reply, Mary took Nancy’s hand in hers, just as she was, and kneeled down and prayed that they might love God, and that he would take care of them all.

Mary was of nearly the same age with Laura, but she had thought much on the instructions she had received at Sunday school, and had read her Bible attentively, pondering the truths it contained. Her father’s death, and the necessities which compelled the family to pass most of their time away from home, and in labour for others, made her still more thoughtful, and she had found sweet peace in praying to her heavenly Father, and in reading

of Him who came to our earth to seek and to save the sinful and the sorrowing who believe in him.

Many who saw Mary Dow's quiet, gentle manner, her industry, and care to perform all her duties, said she was quite a remarkable girl, and had not had many advantages either; but they gave themselves little thought respecting the source of that cheerfulness and faithful self-denial. They forgot the injunction of the apostle: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things.*" When they noticed how different she was from most girls of her age—how constant in her labours, how anxious to do everything for those at home, how pleasant and kind in her influence among the wild and reckless girls at the mill, striving as she sat at work to do them good—they were contented with mere casual praise of her, without seeing in "these things" the love

of Christ in her heart, leading her to imitate him.

Mary left her sister quite occupied with some pieces of calico which she was arranging, although her heart was still looking for the promised visit. But when Mrs. Dow returned at night, the little girl burst into tears :—

“She has not been here all day, and she promised me she would certainly come.”

“Hush, my dear. Now I have come home, do not let me find Nancy turned into a little fretful girl. You do not know what may have prevented Miss Laura. I will tell you about some pretty yellow birds I saw to-day in their cages.”

CHAPTER III

"IMAGES—IMAGES."

BUT what had detained Laura? Just nothing at all. When the pale crippled child was before her, she thought she should like very much to make her happy. But out of sight, the impulse was over, and she was interested in something else. That day she came home in high glee.

"Oh, I have found the most beautiful old man, and the sweetest little boy, and the prettiest statuettes!"

"What a supply of adjectives you have, Laura!"

"Oh, you need not laugh, Eleanor; they were superb!"

"What! all three of them?"

"Yes, Laura," said James, "do tell us

about the 'superb' boy! Do I know the chap?"

"No, he is an Italian. This morning I went to Julia Blake's, and she wanted me to walk with her as far as the new street. As we were going along, she asked me if I had ever been into the shop where they had images for sale. I told her no, and she proposed that we should go and see them. So in we went; and we saw an old Italian, not so very old either, and his little boy. And there were plaster images all round on the shelves; the man makes them, and the boy carries them round the streets from house to house on a board on his head. They had ever so many perfect beauties!—the Fisherman, Little Samuel, the Sleeping Boy, vases and pitchers of all kinds, and watch-stands, and a great many more things that I do not know the names of. They had moulds, and a great furnace where he bakes the plaster."

"Where do they stay?" asked James.

"They live in the shop all the time, I know; for I saw a loaf of baker's bread on one of

the shelves, and in a little back room,—a closet like,—there appeared to be a sort of bed, as I saw through the half-opened door. The old man talks very broken English; I can hardly understand him. But the boy talks very well; he speaks the words more softly than we do; I do love to hear him pronounce them. His father, when he was talking, often had to ask him the word for such and such a thing. He calls him Silvio. Isn't it a pretty name? And his eyes are as black as—"

"His boots."

"Nonsense, James, but they are very bright. He told us that they had to come away from Italy because his father had offended the government. They never made images in their own country, but here they are very poor. And the boy told us so prettily how kind some ladies had been to them. One day he went round from street to street, and had sold only one image, and they owed more than the price of that for the rent of the shop; and he was almost discouraged, when, on his way back, he stopped at a house, and a kind lady took

four images just to help him along, for she did not want them. He said they must leave town if they did not sell more; and, mother, I was very sorry for them, and I told them—"

"What, Laura?"

"That I would take some if he would bring them here."

"You did very wrong. I know you have spent all your allowance for this month, and you have bought things two or three times before for which I have paid. It will not do. Your father will not like it. And what can you want with these coarse plaster images? They break at the least touch almost; and they always become very dusty, even with all the care you may take of them, and then they look very badly."

"The glazed ones can be washed, mother."

"Yes, but these common ones are not glazed; they are miserable things, and we do not want them about the house."

"I should like them up in my room, mother. Do let me have them, now I have told the boy I would take them."

"What is that, Laura?" said Mr. Marshall, who had entered the room while they were speaking.

Laura repeated the story of the boy, although with less enthusiasm. The first glow of feeling had subsided, as the lower tone and slower utterance evidently showed. Just as she finished, a cry of "Images! images!" was heard in the side yard, and a boy with his wares on his head passed the window.

"There come the fine arts to you, Laura," said Eleanor.

"Oh, what shall I do? He will expect me to buy some images. I told him I would. Dear father, please give me the money."

"But you must not make promises in this way without our knowledge. It will never do."

"But this is charity, father. This old man and boy are very poor, and are trying to earn a living. Please, father;" and she went coaxingly up to him.

"But you have no right to engage other people's money in charity."

Laura still entreated, "This once,—only this once, dear father."

"Well, how many of the trumpery things do you wish?"

"I told him that we would take a great many. I did not think—"

"You did a very foolish thing, and I shall not give you money for more than one of them. And that is only for the boy's sake, if you have promised him."

James asked if he might tell the boy to come in; and as he displayed his images, and extolled them in his broken English, James too became interested in the young foreigner. "I have eighteenpence," said he, counting his money. "I will pay for that sleeping fellow under the tree, Laura."

Mr. Marshall bought a tall vase, which was better executed than the others, for they were not any of them very creditable specimens. But Silvio turned to Laura, and asked her if she was not going to take all the other images. She looked at her father, mother, and sister Eleanor, and implored them each in turn; but

they refused. At last her father said, "I will advance you the next month's allowance; but you must remember that if you spend it, you will not have any more money for more than five weeks."

Now it happened that Laura had already appropriated this in her mind to several different purposes, and she did not like to relinquish it. The Italian looked at her, and asked again, "Would the young lady take them?" There was a pause, and on the part of one, at least, a disagreeable embarrassment. James, who pitied people in distress, good naturedly said to the boy, "These two are for her; it is the same as if she took them." The Italian thanked him very pleasantly; but he had evidently received large promises of selling a great many.

"Do not hinder him, Laura," said Mr. Marshall.

And reluctantly she told the boy that she could not buy any more that day.

"May I come back again to-morrow?" he asked.

▲

The future always seemed easy to Laura, and she was about to let him go out with the idea of better times another day; but James whispered, "It will be worse if he comes again," and added aloud, "She does not want any more images." The boy placed them slowly one by one on his board, which he raised on his head, and bidding them good-day, he went away, but with so sad an expression, that Laura felt still more sorry for the disappointment she had caused—not, I fear, for the fault itself. Her father, thinking that this might be the commencement of pecuniary carelessness, told her that this must be a lesson. She must not make bargains, or enter into any engagements to purchase, unless she had money to pay for the articles on the spot. Laura promised very confidently for the future.

That afternoon Jane Manning came to see her, and the first thought of Laura was that drawing-book. "I hope she will not think of it!" she said to herself. And as she went to the door to meet her friend, she was not as cordial as usual. Jane asked if she had any

engagement that afternoon ; and she answered hesitatingly, that perhaps she might walk out somewhere. Jane offered to accompany her, and they took the direction of a favourite walk toward the bridge. But the stroll was not a pleasant one to Laura. She felt embarrassed every time a beautiful view or any attractive spot was noticed, and thought that drawing would come next. So she talked very fast, and rather disconnectedly, as people often do when all is not at peace in their minds.

On their return, Jane continued to walk on with her as far as Mr. Marshall's gate, and under ordinary circumstances Laura would certainly have asked her in, but her thoughts were haunted by the book ; and as she talked, she kept moving towards the house, and extended no invitation. What is the reason that we are so often unkind to those whom we are conscious of having injured ?

"O Laura," said Jane, just as her friend's hand was on the door, "if you please, I will take that drawing-book you were so good as to give me the other evening. Mother objected,

at first, to my accepting it, as she thinks the habit of exchanging presents is sometimes carried too far between girls; but I told her that Mrs. Marshall was present, and approved of this. And Anne and I are going to commence the lessons at once."

"Yes, but not now, Jane;" and Laura hastily entered the house, and sat down, and cried from vexation. "It is strange," she thought, "that when I mean to be so generous, and have so many kind feelings, nothing turns out right. I do believe selfish people get along better."

It is more flattering to ourselves to think that we suffer for a virtue rather than for a fault; and in private reflections people sometimes make such an exchange of causes. Laura never asked herself what *wrong* or mistake it was that led to such cross purposes and perplexing results in her plans.

"What can be the matter with her?" thought Jane, as she turned away from the gate. "She cannot be unwilling to give me the book, for it was her own proposal, and she was so earnest about it."

CHAPTER IV.

SELF-PLEASING.

BUT the idea of imitating the character of which Laura had read, and the narrative of which had so pleased her, was not entirely relinquished. Although somewhat disturbed by the impossibility of turning all her different feelings and fancies into good results, she still busied her imagination often in thinking what she should do if she were Gertrude, or how Gertrude would act in her place. Such a fancied transformation was a kind of solace for present failures, and gave her the satisfaction of feeling that her *intentions* were all very good.

This self-satisfaction, which was often evident in her manner, sometimes provoked the mirth of her brother. There was to be a con-

cert in town by a certain well-known family of singers, and, as the advertisement said, "positively for one evening only this season." Both James and Laura wished to attend. They were talking about it, and laughing over their recollection of the same family who had sung there the previous winter

"But I shall wish one of you to remain at home," said Mrs. Marshall. "We go—your sister and myself—to take tea with Mrs. Wells, and your father will leave us in the evening for a bank meeting."

"But where is Bridget?"

"Several days ago I promised her that she should have Thursday evening."

"But any other evening will do as well for her, mother."

"I was surprised at the time that she should ask me so long in advance; but I found that she was going somewhere to meet her sister, whom she has not seen since she has been in this country; and I do not like to refuse her now."

"But, mother, she can go to see her to-morrow. So do not let that make any difference."

"No, my dear. Bridget has done very well for us; and as I told her she should have the evening, I cannot consent to disappoint her."

"Oh, it cannot be of any consequence to her, and—"

"Why not?" asked James. "Did that what's-her-name girl, that you were going to copy, think that disappointments made no difference to other people?"

"But I am sure," she rejoined in a tone of vexation, "her enjoyment is not of so high an order as ours. We admire the music, and it is seldom we hear any so good as this will be; but she can go and see her sister any time."

"Why, her pleasure is as much to her as ours is to us. If you had been away from your family two or three years, working hard for other people, and doing as they wished all that time, wouldn't you like to be able to go and see your sister, instead of having to give it up, that somebody else might have a good time at a concert?"

"Why not lock up the house, mother?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Marshall.

"Because your cousin, Mrs. Hale, may come in the last train, which is due soon after eight o'clock, and I wish her to find some of the family here to welcome her."

"But I can get some one to come in just for this evening, and sit while we are gone. And it is uncertain, after all, whether she comes on to-night, or waits until the early train to-morrow."

"She may come, dear, and I should not like her to find all our family away. Either you or James must stay at home."

"It is too bad," muttered Laura. "All the girls are going; and Julia Blake said she would call for me, and we would sit together."

"And you are going to deny yourself," said James archly, "and give up your gratification for Bridget and me! Ah, Laura!"

But seeing that she looked really grieved, he said, "Never mind. I will stay, though you are a little like jelly-cake, with a layer of sweet and a layer of sour—one thing one minute, and then another. But don't be sour now"

Laura was mortified that she could not sup-

port her character for generosity, and at the same time gratify the present desire ; but not seeing the way clear to do this, she went to the concert.

Her friends were by her side. The hall was brilliantly lighted, and the programme was duly performed by the musical family, who commenced in the usual manner by coming on the platform in a row, stiff as a line of soldiers, folding their hands before them, and bowing to the audience. They did their best to please ; and in their selections, sound echoed sense, which cannot be said of all popular songs. But still Laura had some wandering thoughts that her theories had not been very well carried out ; and these took something from the pleasure of the occasion. The sweetest notes are discordant to one whose mind is ill at ease, from a consciousness of wrong desires or dispositions.

CHAPTER V.

BENEVOLENT INTENTIONS.

VACATION days pass swiftly ; and with Laura it was nearly time to return to school. She had gone through the prescribed sewing, and whatever had been allotted to her at home ; but most of her time had been at her own disposal. Her love of excitement had drawn her abroad a great deal, and she had intended to attempt to do some good for others.

One morning she was found very busy at all her drawers and boxes ; and as Mrs. Marshall entered the chamber, she was surprised to see every table and chair loaded with promiscuous heaps of clothing.

“What now, Laura ? What are you doing with all these things strewn around in such confusion ?”

"I was going to look over them all, and take out what I couldn't wear any more, and ask you if I might give them away."

"To whom?"

"I know a great many who would be glad of them. There is a family in South Street, and they are very poor, and they have a nice little boy and girl. I should like to give some to them."

"But do you know whether they are deserving people? If they are really needy, we can speak to the Howard Society about them, and they can help them more judiciously than you would."

"But, mother, do let me give them some of these old things of mine. The woman can make them over for the children. Do, please."

"Well, let me see what you have taken out. Yes; those you might give away, if you were certain that they would be properly used. And these things you will not wear any more."

"And this silk cape, mother; you said last summer that this would not be fit for me another season. Let me put that in."

"No, child. It would not be appropriate for them. It is silk, and too light a blue; and, although it is too much spotted for you to wear again, it would not answer their purpose."

"O mother, it would delight the little girl so much! And she is smaller than I am, so that the largest spot could be cut out in making it over. Do, mother; she would be so delighted."

"It would not match with any other part of her dress, probably, and so would be ridiculous. She ought to have a different thing,—something more durable."

"But, mother, perhaps it will do for her best one, and it will please her so, if you let me give it to her."

And Mrs. Marshall finally consented to add the cape to the pile of articles, after objecting to some of them, but yielding, as was her custom, to the ardent impulse of her child. These "fits and starts" of Laura's, as she used to call them, were so strong that it required more firmness to resist them than it was easy for her mother to exercise; and so this impetuous

nature was suffered to waste itself by drifting hither and thither among hosts of unfulfilled purposes.

A bundle was made up of the half-worn articles, and Laura carried them with much pleasure to the family, who received them with a profusion of thanks and no little flattery.

"Blessings on her for a generous young lady! May your days be prospered, and a great many of them! You have the heart of a princess;" and much more in this strain made her feel very complacently. Like fresh fuel to the fire, her benevolent intentions gained new force and speed. She laid various plans for the family, who wondered at the sudden descent of their good fortune, and was very lavish of her promises for them all. The more she said, the faster came praise and thanks; and she returned home in a high state of pleasurable excitement. She had a new petition, too, for her mother. Might she just hear the little boy and girl read during vacation? They had nobody to teach them.

"This is wholly unnecessary, Laura," said

Mrs. Marshall. "We certainly have schools enough in town, of every grade. Why don't they go to the primary school in their ward?"

"But they have to be out all day, picking up chips and shavings in the ship-yard, and all round; and then they must sell them, they are so very poor."

"Then how can they come to you? They can go to school at the same time they would be coming here."

"But I am going to—that is, if you will only consent—I want them very much to come here at four o'clock in the afternoon; and then they will have sold all their baskets full, and can learn an hour before dark."

"But think of the streets—so wet and dirty, —they will bring a great deal of mud into the house; and it is very likely they are dirty little creatures. I do not want them here."

"But, mother, I will watch for them, and go to the door every day; and they can come through the side door into the dining-room, and they shall not trouble any one." And seeing her mother about to reply, she added, "I will

send them away precisely at five, and it will only be in vacation. Do let me try."

"What do *you* think of it?" asked Mrs. Marshall, turning to her eldest daughter.

"Oh, she will soon become tired of it herself; and if she does not, there will be some other wild scheme started in its place."

Eleanor was too indifferent to what did not immediately affect herself to think more of her sister's busy mind than of the movements of the weather-cock,—as if anything which concerns an immortal soul, and occupies its noble faculties, can be of little consequence! But Eleanor's more quiet disposition, and easy conformity to the customs around her, freed her from much blame, although it produced no positive excellence. She had passed through childhood and school-days, and was now a young lady in society, doing what might be naturally expected of her, and taking care to offend nobody's taste and oppose nobody's opinions. And although it might be questioned what she really did to make the world any wiser or better for her living in

it, she generally slid along, and escaped criticism.

Laura's petition was granted; and, indeed, we suspect she had anticipated the permission, for she went on with her arrangements, and it did not seem necessary to inform her pupils, who came quite punctually,—only there were three instead of two.

"Johnny Mallory wanted to come too,—if ye're willin'."

The teacher had no objection. Everything afforded her high delight, even if the children did seem more interested in the contents of the dining-room than of the book. But there was one drawback. Peggy Riley had come dressed in her new blue silk cape, which had not been made over for her, according to Laura's suggestion, but was large enough to show quite a margin of not very clean neck above it, and it hung over her shoulders like a fireman's cape. It was a strange contrast with the torn and draggled dress which hung like a fringe of tatters below it. Laura was very much afraid that her mother and Eleanor would

see the child as she passed the window, and would laugh at the inappropriately delicate and over-grown cape on that ragged and slatternly figure. But they were otherwise occupied; and she did not introduce the subject herself when she described her school and her success.

The succeeding day, and the next, the teacher was quite punctual to her time and place; and whether progress was made or not, the pupils did not trouble the other members of the house. The fourth afternoon Laura had an invitation to ride, which she was very sorry to refuse; and that day teaching had its trials. "They were the most stupid children," she told Eleanor afterward, "and did not seem to try to learn."

"Yes," said her sister quietly, "you are getting tired of it, as I supposed you would."

"No, but when I do so much for them, they don't seem to be at all grateful."

Ah, Laura did not know that when we begin to open a debt and credit account of the benefits we confer and the appreciation we expect on the other side, it will not lighten our efforts!

Her Irish pupils were very much like the rest of the world, when expected to be in a constant state of gratitude.

A day or two afterward Laura walked out with one of her school-mates after dinner, intending to be back punctually at four o'clock. But they met acquaintances, and time passed insensibly; and as Laura was hastening home, she saw by the church clock that it lacked but twenty minutes of five! She hurried into the house; and on asking for the children, and if any one knew about them, her mother told her she must inquire of Bridget, who went to the door to them. At that moment Bridget came into the parlour to ask her mistress for some directions; and in answer to Laura's inquiry if she had seen the children that afternoon, she said,—

“See the young ones! And sure I did, and boxed their ears into the bargain! That Jim Riley is the worst boy in town, and the very one I chased out of the garden last autumn, when he was after gittin' the grapes. I haven't had a chance of him since, and now he had the

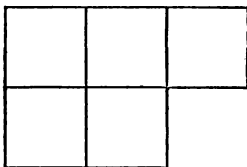
impudence to come here! Yes, and I boxed his ears before he could run away. And his sister had on somebody's silk cape, just like Miss Laura's. The family are the worst pack in town. The father has money in the bank, marm, and lets his children go round the streets beggin', and gittin' their livin' out of folks. I know 'em root and branch. The children ain't honest, and ain't brought up to be; and I knew, marm, you wouldn't want 'em comin' here. And I guess they won't again!" And with all that, Bridget's face was so red, and her tone so loud, that Mrs. Marshall told her that would do.

But it was the last day of Laura's class in the dining-room.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EXHORTATION.

“**H**ERE I have a puzzle for you, James and Laura,” said Mr. Marshall one evening, taking out of his pocket a business card and cutting it into strips. “I take fifteen pieces, and make five squares of them. Now I can remove *three* of these pieces, and leave but *three squares*. Which of them do I take away in order to do it? Here it is. Let me see who will get it first.”



“I have it!” cried Laura. “Take away this;”—but I will not mention *which* she said;

because if you have tried it, you know already; and if you have not, it may be more pleasant to ascertain for yourself.

"You are certainly quick at combinations," said Mr. Marshall. "Why have you never accomplished more in mathematics? I excelled in that branch at college. A short time since, Professor P—— met me, and after he had inquired about my children, he said, 'I suppose they inherit your mathematical bump.' But you, Eleanor, were very fair, nothing extraordinary, in algebra, and geometry; and James seems to be ditto. And you, Laura, are by no means far advanced; and yet you might do better, I think."

"I will the next session, father. I always liked arithmetic very well, and meant to excel, but something always took up my time."

"That is the weakest of all excuses. You certainly have sufficient time allowed at school for your mathematics; and if not, what hinders you from applying yourself diligently at home?"

"There are a great many interruptions at home, father."

"No, you have no necessary interruptions

here; but if you take up with every passing thing, you will waste your time wherever you are. Why don't you go to your room every day at a certain hour, or into the dining-room, and determine to devote an hour, or two hours, of undivided attention to this one study?"

"I have tried to sometimes, but——"

"But you needed application and perseverance. You follow every new thing; and more than any one you need the discipline of mathematics. Dr. Johnson was acquainted with superior ladies in his day—Hannah More, Miss Burney, and many others; and he was capable of judging, and he said that a woman could not know too much arithmetic. There is a tendency in mathematical studies to give balance and stability to the mind. Just what you need, Laura. Try, persevere; and I shall expect you to take for a model Mrs. Somerville, who, though she can calculate eclipses, and write valuable text-books on natural philosophy and chemistry, is yet thoroughly versed in domestic knowledge, and in all the useful accomplishments of a lady."

CHAPTER VII.

RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS.

IN Laura's school there might be seen three or four girls going quietly out at recess, instead of staying in the school-room or the entry. They had evidently some subject of deep interest on which they talked together, as they walked slowly along that they might not go beyond the sound of the bell. When that was heard, they turned their steps quickly toward the school-room, and entering, quietly resumed their studies.

What drew them thus together? In many respects they were very different; but there was some strong bond of interest among them. The feeling which thus united them was the sweetest sympathy known on earth,—the mutual desire to be consecrated to the service of

God, and to assist one another in the divine life. These young girls were seeking to be Christians. They felt that they had all, like the prodigal son, wandered from their Father's house into "a far country," and they "began to be in want." They knew that neither the amusements nor occupations to which they had given all their attention could ever satisfy the deepest cravings of their immortal nature. They had felt the sad power of sin in their own hearts, leading them continually to wrong and sorrow, and they determined to seek the forgiveness of their heavenly Father. Often before this they had entertained transient desires to be good, and some general idea of resolving to do right, and had failed. They had found that the human heart cannot heal its own diseases; and they sought His aid who is the way, the truth, and the life. They prayed that the Holy Spirit might guide them aright. Thus they loved to speak to one another of this new-born interest in Christ, and to read the Sacred Scriptures together.

Had there been any especial occurrence which

thus drew their attention to religious subjects? Yes. One who had belonged to their number for many sessions,—a sweet girl, and very much beloved,—had faded away in the early summer. Just as the blossoms gave forth their fragrance and the birds their melody, she passed away to a land fairer than the flowers, and resounding with more perfect music than ever reaches mortal ears.

Fanny May had been religiously taught from childhood; and the sheltering tenderness and prayerful solicitude of her parents had been blessed to her—their only one. When she had drooped, and was urged to remain at home through the warm weather, it was with the hope that rest might restore her vigour. But day by day she failed; and increasing feebleness warned her that she would never again meet her companions in the school-room.

To her, the change brought no fear. Dearly as she loved parents and home, friends and books, she felt that He who had died to redeem her would lead her through the dark valley. At first the hearts of her parents were filled

with deep anguish, and it seemed impossible that death should tear from them their all—the light of their life. But gradually they could hear her allude to it, and listen with calmness while she spoke of that eternal home, where no sin or sorrow mars the redeemed soul's joyful communion with God.

“Can you not let your child go a little before you?” she asked. And like the precious perfume from the box of alabaster, there came from the broken heart of sorrow the words, “*Thy will, not mine, be done.*”

One evening, as Fanny was watching the setting sun, she told her mother that one thing troubled her,—the thought of the girls at school. She had tried, she said, to influence them to good by a quiet and consistent conduct, but she had excused herself too much from direct influence. In shrinking from any step that might tend to a misapprehension of her motives, she had taken counsel of fear instead of faith. There was a dread of hearing sacred subjects rudely treated, which had come like a screen between her sensitive nature and

others. But now a few days only remained to her, and she must do what she could by seeing and conversing with them.

So, when she was able to bear the fatigue of conversation, one or two of her companions came at a time to see her. She told them, with affectionate simplicity, how blessed it was, both in life and in death, to have Christ for a friend. Particularly, she tried to impress them with the truth that religion "is not gloomy, that it enhances every true pleasure, and adds a higher and a deeper joy." And with fervour she repeated, "If our life is only 'hid with Christ in God,' neither things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

To those girls whom she could not see she sent kind and earnest messages. As her young friends looked at the calm and happy expression of her face, and remembered the sweet serenity of her life, they felt that there was a peace for the child of God which they had not experienced. Her death sealed this impression

to many minds, and it was not forgotten. To many she yet spoke, and whispered to their spirits of the Father and the home to which she had gone.

This influence was perceived in school ; and Laura, whose sympathetic nature had been touched by the departure of the kind and gentle Fanny May, and by the messages which bore to her companions the last expression of her affection and interest in them, joined the little band who were seeking to know Jesus.

For a while Laura read the Scriptures daily, and prayed to God for forgiveness of her sins. But there lurked in her mind a secret thought that she was very good to make such an effort—a great deal better than the wild girls who gave no attention to it. There was to her a pleasant excitement in going apart from them, in preferring the society of the others, and in being considered as one who was desirous to be a Christian.

For a while this stimulated her interest ; but gradually she grew inattentive to her seasons

of devotion, often performed them hastily, and soon trifling things were suffered to set them aside entirely. She sometimes felt compunction for such remissness, and seated herself mechanically to read a chapter in the Bible; but wandering thoughts came, and rendered it a lifeless form. She consoled herself, too, with the fact that some of the other girls had lost their interest in duty also. Like snow-flakes on a flowing stream, their better purposes and good resolutions dissolved and disappeared in the current of selfish feelings and petty pursuits. It was not so with all. A few had humbly and earnestly sought that narrow way which leadeth to eternal life, and were rejoicing in that Good Shepherd who led them beside the still waters, and filled their souls with peace. Thus it was with the sower in the parable.

“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they

withered away. And some fell among thorns ; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them : but others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty-fold, some thirtyfold."

CHAPTER VIII.

NEGLECT OF DUTY.

IT was Wednesday afternoon, and Laura was riding out with one of her companions, pleased, as she always was when she was the leading spirit in an enterprise, and especially when she had an opportunity to manage a horse. There was an exhilaration in the very motion that excited her. And a sense of power made the relation of the driver and the horse very pleasant to her. Mr. Marshall had allowed her to drive several times when riding with him, and did not feel afraid to trust her with an animal whose general habits and disposition he knew.

This afternoon he told Laura that she might drive with one of her friends about four miles out of town, and do an errand for him at a

farm-house. Delighted with the idea, she called Julia Blake to go with her, and set out in high glee. Every passing object furnished her subjects for comment, and particularly was she pleased with her own skill in turning out when they passed carriages. Although the road was not narrow enough to require much skill, she evidently thought that her style of driving was quite superior. She reached the farm-house, executed her commission, and started on her return. She had gone but a short distance when Julia complained of thirst, and asked her to stop at a pretty house close by, that she might procure some water; and they accordingly drove up to the gate. After Julia had knocked at the door, a lady came out toward the chaise with her; and Laura remembered that it was some one whom she had seen at her mother's.

"It is Mr. Marshall's daughter, is it not?" she inquired. "I thought I knew you as you drove up to the gate. Are you going directly back to town?"

On being answered that they were, she said,—

"I have a great favour to ask of you. My little Robert is quite sick. Mr. Hervey and our hired man have gone away fifteen or twenty miles on business, and I do not know at what time they will return, so that we have no conveyance at home, and there are only the girl and myself in the house. I want to send for a physician, and Margaret was just going; but it is a long walk into town, and she does not know much about the streets, and I am afraid she would make some mistake. Would you be so kind as to ride to Dr. Jackson's, and ask him to come here immediately; and if he is not at home, get Dr. Howe? Poor Robert is suffering so much, and I shall be so much obliged to you."

"Certainly," answered Laura; "I can call just as well as not."

"And, please, ask him to make no delay."

"I will tell him so."

And Laura urged her horse homeward. Hardly was she out of sight of the house, however, before Julia exclaimed, "There are Charles and Sarah Smith! They are out on

a ride. I wish we had known it. We might have come together."

The two carriages stopped for a parley.

"Where are you going?"

"Back to town. Where are you bound?"

"Oh, we are going to Horse-shoe Pond, about two miles to the right. Do go with us: it is the prettiest spot."

"I never was there," said Laura, "but I cannot go this afternoon."

"Why not? Your father wouldn't object, I know."

"No; but I promised to do an errand for a woman who has a sick child, so I must hurry back. It is too bad, for father would be willing that I should use the horse as much as I pleased. It is too bad that it happens so."

"Don't wait and lose time," whispered Julia. "You know you engaged to go directly to Dr. Jackson's."

"Well, I am going there; but I do wish we could go to the pond."

"Do go, do go," interposed the brother and sister. "It will take but a few minutes longer."

It is close by, and you can just take a peep at it, and we will turn and drive so much the faster back then."

"But, as I promised to do this errand, I must go straight home, I suppose. I am so sorry."

"It is a shame, now that you are so near. You might just see the place, and then we could all visit it together some other time. The sun is up ever so high; it is early now; you could get back in good season."

"I know it, but—," and Laura hesitated.

"I wouldn't go," whispered Julia; "it may make a difference if you delay."

"What are you saying there, Julia Blake? Now, if Laura don't go, I shall know it is owing to you.—Why, we can be back in half-an-hour. Come, start your nag, and let's see your driving, Laura."

"I have a great mind to just see the place. I'll make the horse go quick."

"Don't, Laura; perhaps you will be sorry for it."

"Come! how long are you going to stand

here in the middle of the road? You might see the pond in this time. Start off. Here we go. No; you go first, and see if we can keep up with you. First right-hand turn."

Julia laid a restraining hand on the reins, but Laura said, "We won't be gone but a very short time;" and on they rode. Every one knows, if he has ever inquired about distances on the road, that there is a great difference in miles; and these two seemed to Julia remarkably long ones. But the Smiths passed them very soon, and kept looking out at the back of their carriage, bowing and laughing at them; which, together with her skill as charioteer, quite occupied Laura.

On they drove, until they arrived at the pond, which was beautiful enough to reward their labour. The clear waters reflected the blue sky above, and groves and verdant slopes adorned its banks. The hotel, which was pleasantly located near it, seemed to be overflowing with people, while others still were enjoying a boating excursion on the pond.

The Smiths got out of their carriage, and

coming to Laura, exclaimed with exultation, "There! didn't we tell you so? Isn't this grand? Only think, people are just beginning to find out what a beautiful place this is! We have been here only once before. Ain't you glad you came?"

"Yes, if we were not obliged to go directly back," answered Laura regretfully. "We must go now."

"Yes; do let us make haste," added Julia.

"Oh, you must remain a few minutes, and have your horse rubbed down; he will go as well again for it, and you won't lose any time by it. Come into the house, and we will have an ice-cream and some lemonade."

They hesitated, and Laura said, "No;" but Charles Smith said, "Don't you use your horse any better than that, Laura? Do have some water thrown over his feet; he looks warm."

Thus appealed to, she did not resist; and the party went into the house, and the Smiths ordered some refreshments.

"Come out on the portico while they are

getting ready what we want," said they. "People are having fine sport out there."

Gentlemen and ladies and children were amusing themselves in this shaded spot, where fine air and a beautiful prospect were combined. The frolic of the little ones, as they ran about enjoying space and freedom, and playing at their various games, was accompanied by such ringing laughter that their elders were generally tempted to join with them. Our party watched them for a long time, until some one proposed to walk down by the side of the pond. "No, Laura, we *must* go," said Julia.

"There it is again! Julia Blake, you are a perfect marplot to-day. What is the matter with you?"

"Why, Charles, we promised to call the doctor to go and see a sick child, and I can't help thinking of it. See, how low the sun is!"

"So it is!" said Laura, and at last they started homeward.

Now that the excitement of expectation and novelty was over, Laura herself began to feel

some anxiety, and to complain that the horse did not do his part toward carrying them home. As they drove into town Julia said, "Now, don't stop to drop me; ride on as fast as you can to the doctor's."

"Gone out!"

"Oh, I am so sorry."

"He has been gone out about ten minutes; but as he left no word, he'll be in soon."

"Oh dear!" cried Laura, stepping into the chaise again. "Now for Dr. Howe's!" But just as she came within sight of his house, she saw him step into his carriage with his little trunk, so he must be going some distance. Both the girls tried to attract the doctor's attention, and induce him to stop; but he did not perceive them, and rode rapidly away from his door. What were they to do now? Go back to Dr. Jackson's house with the uncertainty of finding him, or seek some other physician? They decided on the first course; and when they returned to the house they found that Dr. Jackson had just come in; so they did their errand, and he promised

to ride immediately and see Mrs. Hervey's child.

Very much relieved, our young friends turned to go home. Laura left her companion at her door; and as she drove up to the gate she found her own family anxiously expecting her.

"Why, Laura, where have you been? It is almost dark, and it could not have taken you half this time to go to Perkins' Mills and back again. Your Aunt White has come."

Scarcely had the greetings been exchanged when Mr. Marshall came into the house and said, "You have driven very fast, Laura. I thought I could trust you; but the horse would not look so after going that distance at any reasonable rate. Did you ride anywhere else?"

Laura hesitated. "We met Charles and Sarah Smith, and they urged us to go with them to Horse-shoe Pond, and said it was only two miles farther. Julia thinks that it was more, but we did not know it. I am very sorry; but they urged us so, and it was so

beautiful there. I thought you wouldn't mind if I did. I didn't think—"

Ah, how much a life depends on these two conditions,—“I thought,” and “I didn't think”! How often one has thought of the pleasure of a thing who “*didn't think*” of all the consequences!

The next morning a lady called quite early to speak to Mrs. Marshall about the arrangements of some ladies' society.

“This is a terrible affliction of the Herveys. Little Robert is their only boy, and last evening when the doctor got there he was not expected to live. He ought to have been called there sooner, he told them; but—”

Laura waited to hear no more. She went up to her chamber, and closed the door, hardly conscious of what she was doing. In a few minutes a low knock was heard, and the door was gently opened by Mrs. White, who kissed her and said,—

“Are you sick, my dear Laura? I saw you turn so pale when you left the parlour that I wanted to come to you. What shall I do for

you?" And she drew her so gently toward her that Laura burst into tears, and as soon as she could speak she gave her aunt the history of her ride the day before.

"And now, if he die, I shall never forgive myself, aunt. I have killed him—I know I have;" and she wrung her hands in agony.

Mrs. White put her arm around her, and drew her head toward her shoulder, and smoothed her hair, saying,—

"Let us ask God to forgive you, dearest. It was against him you sinned, as well as against this poor mother, in neglecting the duty he put in your way, and following your own passing inclination."

Laura still wept violently.

"My dear child," said her aunt, after a few minutes, "I used to know Mrs. Hervey a little, and I will get a carriage and go directly to her. Perhaps I may be able to assist her, as I know something of sickness; and I can inform you respecting Robert. But let me pray with you; and after I am gone try to lift up your

heart to God. Only in him can you have strength and peace."

Mrs. White immediately prepared to go, and took a boy with her to drive back, if she should be needed. When he returned he brought Laura a pencilled note,—

"Little R. very ill. Mrs. H. glad of assistance, as she has no nurse with her. *You know to whom you must look for help.*"

It was impossible for Laura to employ herself in indifferent matters, or appear with any calmness that day; and when the family insisted on an explanation of her singular appearance, she told them the circumstances which affected her. She evidently suffered so much from self-reproach that they refrained from expressing how much they blamed her; but it was very apparent that they, too, felt great anxiety.

Hour after hour passed slowly away, and she sought the solitude of her chamber; for she could not bear to remain below and see chance visitors, and hear indifferent conversation, when at that very moment the boy might

be dying, and that, too, through her negligence.

Every sound startled her. It might be her aunt returning, and yet she did not wish for that; for, as long as she stayed, there was life and hope. The day wore on, and at tea-time Mr. Marshall insisted on his daughter coming down to the table,—she would be sick, and she must not yield to such violent feelings.

“Just like Dorothy, to go immediately there, although she has just come for a visit. She always looks round to see who needs her most, instead of thinking of her own pleasure,” she heard her father say as she was passing along the lobby.

“Oh, how different I am,” she thought; and the text of a sermon she had recently heard flashed through her mind: “Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.” And she prayed that God would give her a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within her.

During the lonely watches of the night, as Laura awoke frequently from fitful sleep, with the feeling of some weight of grief upon her,

and there came the consciousness of the reality, two petitions broke from her aching heart: "Oh, save the child, and make me a new creature!"

The next day brought a message from Mrs. White, sent in by Mr. Hervey's servant, who had been on an errand in town. Laura tremblingly broke it open and read,—

"Robert seems to be slightly relieved. We hardly dare hope. I have just persuaded Mrs. H. to lie down."

Slight as the encouragement was, it caused most heartfelt gratitude. Again and again were those lines read and studied, to extract from them the solace of hope.

A few days afterward Mrs. White returned with the intelligence that the doctor pronounced Robert out of danger, and said he would be well with good nursing; and Laura felt that her heavenly Father had indeed been merciful to her.

CHAPTER IX.

A KIND DEED.

“WHO is that neat and pleasant-looking girl?” asked Aunt White of Laura, as they were walking out one day, and saw Mary Dow on the opposite side of the street, on her way to her daily labour.

Laura told her, and then gave her some account of Mary’s family and home,—not including, however, the disappointment of little Nancy which I have mentioned to you, for her promises passed away like the early dew, too frequently for her to recall it. Mrs. White proposed that they should call at Mrs. Dow’s and see the little cripple. They heard a very ready answer to their knock, and the solitary one was extremely glad to see them. Laura was surprised to find how much that was inter-

esting and yet profitable her aunt spoke to the child. And she did not wonder that, when they rose to leave, Nancy held her hand, as if she could not let her go, and begged her to come again.

After they left the house, Mrs. White seemed to be thoughtful and silent, and then she said to her niece, "Now I should like to have you go with me to the physician who knows Nancy, and we will see if a chair with wheels cannot be made for her, so that she could be moved about. If he says it can be done, we will go to some place where we can ascertain the price of it, and then try to find the ways and means to get her one. It will be a great relief for her to taste the fresh air, and see a little more of this bright and beautiful earth; and there are young people enough who might draw her out every pleasant day. At least, we will try."

"Oh, why didn't you speak to her about it? Do let me run back and tell her. She will be so delighted."

"No, my dear. Never excite expectations unless you clearly see your way to fulfil

them. It creates disappointment for others, and injures your own strength of purpose. If our plan is practicable, we must consult her mother first, and it will be time enough to tell Nancy when it is all arranged."

Laura's eager spirit could hardly brook the delay, and it required some self-restraint to obey her aunt's wish not to speak of the matter until it was completed. The physician pronounced it an excellent idea, said it would improve the child's general health, and that he had thought of something of the kind himself, but he had a great deal to occupy his time. Furthermore, he volunteered to contribute something toward the expense. Others were easily found to make up the sum required; and they would have considered the money well invested could they have seen Nancy's delight when they drew her about in her chair-waggon.

Such a new world as it opened to her! She drank in with grateful rapture the variety and beauty of God's gifts in nature, which we, who can use our limbs, and have our senses unimpaired, often so ungratefully fail to appreciate.

Soon they found that she could be drawn very well to one of the schools near home, and the children were quite eager in taking turns to draw her there whenever the weather was favourable.

Mrs. White became acquainted with Mary during some of her calls at Mrs. Dow's, and was much interested in her humble and conscientious character. A ready sympathy soon showed them that however different their circumstances, their hearts were enlisted in the same great object in life, and animated by the same hope. Mary loved to take counsel of the riper experience and enlarged Christian culture of her visitor; and Mrs. White rejoiced that Mary, like the Mary of whom Jesus spake, "had chosen that good part which should not be taken from her."

We will whisper to you a secret. Mrs. White has a plan of sending Mary to a school, where she can receive thorough instruction, and be fitted for a situation of usefulness and influence as a teacher. But, as she does not proceed rashly, she has not yet matured this arrange-

ment. We know that she will endeavour to complete it when it shall be best for all the family, for she appreciates the truth that a kindness always gains in value by being *well-timed*.

CHAPTER X.

LEAVING HOME.

WHEN Mrs. White returned home, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall consented to her request that Laura should accompany her. James was somewhat sorry that *he* had not been asked, for he liked country life, and supposed that girls did not mind being cooped up in a town. Still he consoled himself with the idea of "his turn next," and went very cheerfully with the travellers to the station, where he fancied he essentially facilitated arrangements, when he helped the cabman to take off the luggage, and waited for the shrill whistle of the coming engine. Soon the cars swept along the side of the platform, and the passengers crowded one another to step in. Then a good-bye, and yet James followed into the

cars with parting messages to his uncle and cousins, until the whole train moved with a warning jerk, and Eleanor was afraid he would be carried away at full speed before he knew it. He only wanted the excitement of jumping off at the last minute; and he waved his hand, and bowed his friends out of sight. But we go with the travellers, so farewell to Miss Eleanor and James, and let us take our seat in the cars.

We get such a bird's-eye view of objects, as we hurry by them, that it is not satisfactory, and only confuses. Reading is bad for the eyes, besides being nearly impossible, so we shall occupy ourselves with our fellow-passengers. We think, as we look around, of the vast variety of human faces, and what a study they make. There is a family near us which has evidently travelled some distance, and some members of it seem to think quite far enough for comfort. There is a mother wholly occupied with an infant that feels inclined to pull all prominent objects, and seizes first a collar, and then somebody's nose; and as one

thing after another is claimed before the little fat fingers can close tightly over it, it still gets others into possession. On the same seat is a little boy who might have seen three or four years of life, and he is tired of his share of travelling, and says, "I do not want to be taken any more in the cars." The baby by this time protests against the constant invasion of her rights, and sets up a prolonged cry, which testifies to all the passengers of her grievances; while the boy snarls and whines continually.

Laura, who sat behind them, said, "What cross children!" to her aunt; who replied, "They are tired, poor little things. Let us see if we cannot amuse them." She had not many resources for that purpose with her, but she took a stray newspaper, and rolled it up in the shape of a boat, and, asking Laura to take a vacant seat near, she said to the boy, "Come into my seat, and I will make you some pretty things."

"I don't want to," snarled the child, jerking his shoulders. But children have a strange

skill of their own in reading faces ; and soon seeing her kind smile, he slid down from his seat, and wanted to take the boat into his hands. The same paper was made into a three-cornered cap, and then into something else ; and before long the boy was quite entertained and good-natured. Then his mother had more room, and succeeded in soothing her infant to sleep. After that she turned round and told Willie, as she called him, that she was afraid he would trouble the lady too much ; but he had no inclination to leave his new friend.

The mother became quite communicative, and spoke of her history and plans. Her husband was "away north, where he had a fine opportunity to obtain work," she said, and had written for his family to come on. So she was going to York, where her husband's brother would join them, and would take care of herself and the children the rest of the journey. She had become almost discouraged, it was so hard travelling with children ; and she felt that they were in everybody's way, she said.

Laura's heart quite warmed towards her as she listened; and she, too, was willing to assist her in amusing the children. "But," she thought to herself, "Aunt White did not wait to get interested in them. It is as father said; she always tries to see who needs her most. She has *principle* about it, as well as kind feelings." Laura looked around, and saw how many of the passengers seemed rather annoyed, if they manifested any feeling, at the presence of young children, never considering that mothers and children must travel sometimes, and that those with less care should lighten their way.

It was after eight o'clock when our friends reached their destination, and Laura found her uncle and cousins eagerly expecting their arrival that evening. Her aunt's return seemed to infuse pleasure through the whole household, and it was a happy group. There was much to tell and to hear of what had passed in the interval; but the hour of retirement came. Mr. White then took a Bible, and read a chapter, when all united in prayer, not forgetting

to return thanks for that mercy which had brought them together again.

With an affectionate good-night, they separated ; and Laura was particularly glad that she was to share a room with her cousin Susan, just a year younger than herself.

CHAPTER XL

AT UNCLE WHITE'S.

IN the morning Laura was roused by a bell sounding through the house, at what she thought a very early hour; and she rubbed her eyes, and asked Susan what it meant.

"It is our rising bell," she answered. "We all rise as soon as we hear it; for mother says that if an hour runs away from us in the morning, we cannot overtake it all day. There is an hour before breakfast, after which we have prayers. Mother thinks that it is more convenient for the domestics to have prayers after the meal than before it, as they might be apt to feel hurried, and to have their thoughts on something in the kitchen."

At the devotional exercises Laura observed that there was no air of painful constraint in

those who joined, as if a sense of obligation alone had led them there. During the reading of the Scriptures questions were asked and explanations given, which showed the interest all took in it. If there was any point on which they were not all informed, or if there was more to say on it than the time would then permit, it was considered in the evening, and not passed over superficially. And each member of the family seemed to read separately, and to study the portion which was selected in the social reading, so that by each there was a more intelligent and ready appreciation of it. This *study* of the Scriptures was to Laura a new substitute for the cold, mechanical perusal of them; and she became interested in participating in it.

During the forenoon the family separated to their different employments, at school or house; but there was a promptness and regularity in their arrangements. Every work had its time and place, so that there was no jostling or hurry. Amos and Lawrence attended school, but, for the present, Laura was to study with

Susan a certain number of hours each day. Laura was soon surprised by the discovery that her cousin was more thorough, and even more advanced than herself. While her quick mind had acquired very readily whatever had pleased her, she had been too much in the habit of passing over what she considered *dry*, but which, when understood in connection with other parts, has its value; and she saw that Susan had more real enjoyment in application, and much more satisfactory results from it.

In reading, also, their course had been very different. Laura had read a great many miscellaneous books—biography, magazines, and “whatever was interesting,” as she said. Susan had passed over less space, but had read more systematically. For instance, if she had been engaged in the history of any particular period, she tried to find whatever would illustrate that time, or bring to view some distinguished personages in it. So that one book formed a step to another; and her characters were grouped in their appropriate clusters. This gave distinctness to her ideas, and vividness to

her imagination, for she could see the times and circumstances in which persons lived. Laura was often amused when she spoke of them as of personal acquaintances, and seemed almost to conjecture their very thoughts and feelings; while she, with all her vivid fancy, had but a confused recollection of them, among a great many other things. Susan's views were like a few well-finished pictures, and Laura's like a heap of unfinished, imperfect sketches.

In Mr. White's family there were union and sympathy in amusements as well as in employments. In the hour after tea, when they were all together, they had many a merry sport. There were charades, conundrums, and puzzles in great number. The boys were particularly bright in a game called "Trades." One would offer himself for a certain employment, and the others would ascertain, by ten questions, if he was qualified for it. But this was no favourite with Laura, for she had never learned enough about the nature of *common things* to take a very active part in it. One evening she volun-


teered, as her trade, to make lamp-lighters, feeling sure that she was familiar with all that could relate to that art. The first question was, "What are they made of?" Paper. Then Mr. White asked whether paper was an animal, mineral, or vegetable substance? Oh! vegetable, she was certain, for it was made of cloth. "But sometimes you use newspaper, and there is the ink." Here was something she had not thought of. And Lawrence asked if silk rags were ever manufactured into paper, because then there would be an animal substance. So the easy lamp-lighter proved quite difficult after all.

But although Laura did not fancy nor succeed so well in this game, she entered into many others with much spirit and quickness; and her cousins enjoyed her participation with them. When the snow came, they sometimes had fine sport in the open field at the back of the house, where they often went together; and the girls quite vigorously engaged in sliding on a pond near, while Amos and Lawrence skated or built snow-houses. Amos had a

great taste for architecture, and he endeavoured to mould even the snow into uniform proportions, and really made quite an imposing affair, notwithstanding unfriendly thaws. While they entered with great spirit and zest into all their amusements, they did not overlook three considerations. These were:—that they should be innocent and well chosen; that they should not interfere with any duty; and that they should not engross too much time.

CHAPTER XII

A LESSON ON CHARITY.

 R. WHITE was the proprietor of a comb factory. Laura observed one day various packages of boxes which had been sent to the house. She remembered that she had seen similar boxes before ; and on asking some questions about them, she was told that they were used to pack away combs in for sale.

“Where do you get them?”

“They are made by different people in the vicinity.”

“Why don’t you have them manufactured at the great establishment at L——? You could order a large lot of them at a time, uncle ; and they would be as well done, would they not?”

“Yes, it would be quite as convenient for me ; but there are many persons about us who

like the help of a little ready money, and cannot very well earn it, and your aunt employs them."

"How do they know how to do them nicely? Who teaches them?"

Mr. White smiled.

"Your aunt learned to make them for this purpose, and she has taught these people. After spending an hour or two with them, and watching them a little at first, they do very well. Some of them would not be so comfortable, were it not for help of this kind. There is one poor young man who has been so reduced by rheumatism that he can hardly move one foot before the other, and has been utterly unable to labour. But he can do this light work, at least enough of it to help himself, so that he is not quite dependent on charity; and that is a great comfort to him. You must go out and see some of our friends when your aunt goes on her rounds."

"O aunt!" cried the impulsive Laura, as Mrs. White just then entered the room, "how do you find time and patience to go round,

and teach people box-making, and everything else?"

"No; my instruction is not quite so broad as that—not 'everything else.'"

"Very nearly," rejoined Mr. White, laughing.

"Well, box-making—how can you, in your situation, go round and teach people that?"

"I find time by economizing it. A moment saved is a moment gained, as the proverb says of the penny. Our time is one of our gifts from God, and we must be willing to use some of that, as well as money, for the benefit of others. I try to put people in the way of helping themselves, because it seems to me the true kind of charity. It is easy to give, but in relieving the present want we may really injure the character and habits of the person, if he thus becomes willing to depend on others. If you help him to assist himself, you not only provide for his present, but for his future necessities. But put on your bonnet, and come with me. I shall have a great many commissions for you while you are here, so we will take a survey of the field."

Laura was quickly equipped. As they walked along, Mrs. White pointed out the beautiful views from the hill, and asked Laura if she had learned to observe.

"I often think," she added, "that we know very little of the world we live in. Take any common tree,—a willow like that,—can you describe it as it first appears, and tell all its peculiarities, the history of its blossom, and how long before the tree decays, and what the wood is used for, and how old age affects it?"

Laura smiled and shook her head. "No; I only know that it grows easily if you stick it down into wet ground, and that it is green very early in the spring. I have noticed that the blossom smells sweetly."

"What tree can you describe minutely?"

"Not any, aunt. I am afraid that I couldn't write the life of any tree—not even of the elm, which is my favourite."

"Then you must join our observation party. I have enjoyed it very much. We take an object, and agree to find out all that we can about it; then we appoint a time, and compare

the facts we have collected. In the summer we make more of the plan, and frequently connect it with some excursion. Your cousins now and then ask some of their school friends to join us, and we visit the woods, or some pleasant dell. They like to hear our reports, and frequently add something which they have observed or read.

“The boys have a friend, John Farrar, who went with us several times last summer; and we found him a very close observer of nature, particularly of the habits of animals. He entered into the idea with a great deal of interest. Indeed, we all found that we noticed things around us and remembered them better by comparing our impressions. Susan kept a journal of some of our objects; she can show it to you, if you like. But I want to go in here.”

They knocked at a door, which was opened by a neat-looking woman, who seemed to have hastily dropped her apron at the sound, as she picked it up after having given her visitors seats, and apologized for the paste on it

They had been very busy, she said. At a table sat a man with rather a haggard look ; but the pile of boxes before him, and some pieces he held in his hand, showed that he had not been idle.

"That last lot, Mr. Bryan, was well done," said Mrs. White ; "and I came to consult you about making a new kind of box for fine and coarse combs of the same size. It is to be made with a cross piece in the middle to separate them." And she took up a box and explained her meaning. "It is rather difficult, I think, to get in this piece so that it shall be strong and neat too ; but you have a skill in these things."

After a little conversation, Mrs. White paid for a lot of boxes just completed ; and after inquiring for the children, who were well and at school, she left them.

"They are very poor, are they not ? and he looks sick, or something. What is the matter ?" asked Laura.

"He has been very intemperate, and he neglected his work, and became very reckless.

Perhaps his wife, having no comfort at home, strayed about rather too much; while the children used to come round the village begging almost every day. Mr. White had an opportunity to show Bryan some kindness; and once, when I found him sober, I tried to interest him in making these boxes. He and his wife, as you see, work together now; and their house is comparatively comfortable. She stays at home, and he seems to have some self-respect; but his health was really broken down by his habit of drinking, and terrible exposure at night oftentimes. When he is stronger, I hope he will work at something else."

"But ain't you afraid that he will go back to his old habits?"

"Yes, we do fear it, but we hope more. We try to see him often, and encourage him. He has some taste for reading; that is, for voyages, travels of adventure, or something of that kind. After we go home, we will find some book to interest him, and you can take it to him, and see the children. Go there sometimes when you are out, and it will please them."

Mrs. White made some other calls with her niece; and Laura saw that, although in some instances direct charity had been needed and given, in many more the assistance had been in helping the character of the persons, and giving them (when it was necessary) the means of being industrious. Some correct ideas of economy, and of the true modes of labour, are often of more value than money.

"It seems to me," said Laura, after their return home, "that it is easier to be charitable and judicious in the country than in the city. You know everybody around you, and are not half so liable to imposition." And she then related her attempt to teach the little Rileys, and various other ludicrous failures in her benevolent schemes.

"Were you not influenced too much," said her aunt, "by the gratification of an instinctive feeling, which made it pleasant to think you were very generous, and the object of gratitude?"

Laura acknowledged that it was very agreeable to be praised, and thought it certainly was not wrong.

"But is it not selfish, and does it not fail to produce any reliable and persevering effort for others? These short-lived, changing impulses, if constantly indulged, weaken the power of the will; and they deceive others instead of helping them, for they never know on what to depend. You excite an expectation by one feeling which the next leads you to disappoint. Every broken promise, either to one's self or to others, is a positive injury to truth."

"But," said Susan, "I have been thinking of Laura's question just now. Isn't she right in supposing that it is easier to be charitable in the country than in town?"

"In some respects it is so. You can ascertain more easily who people are, and how they live; and as they are fewer in number, and more known to one another, there are not often cases of such extreme want as you meet with in the city. But 'the poor ye have always with you,' wherever you may live. Charity is less systematic, and the modes of bestowing it are less perfectly organized in rural districts; and therefore you are obliged to depend more on

your own individual efforts, and cannot have counsel and aid in devising the means of usefulness as you may in town. But people crowd together in cities, and they teach one another tricks and devices to extort money, so that much care is necessary not to encourage worthless vagrancy."

"Were you ever deceived, aunt, when you tried to help any one?"

"Yes, very often, I fear. When we lived in B——, it took me some time to learn that I must persevere and obtain accurate knowledge of persons, if I would really benefit the needy without encouraging the worthless. I remember one instance, of a forlorn-looking girl who came to me with a most distressing story of her father who was very ill, and her mother had infant twins, and they were very poor, with very little to wear, and nothing to eat. I gave her some articles of food and clothing, but not without asking her name, and the street and number where she lived. She could only tell me that they were in a chamber in the fourth story of a very old house in

the north part of the city ; but she had forgotten what they called the street. I told her to be very sure the next time, and bring me the name of the street and the number of the house. When she came again she told me the name of the street, but there was no number on the house, she said ; so I made her describe the appearance of it. I still gave her what she asked, and told her to find out the number of the house next to hers before she came again. Meanwhile, however, I went to this street, and could find no person of her name, nor any family that answered to the description. After spending a whole afternoon in fruitless inquiries, I returned home. Two or three times more I tried to follow her directions, but with no success ; I could not find the alley or court where she told me the house was.

One day when she came I detained her while I sent for a carriage, and asked her to go with me to her home. She tried to excuse herself, but I insisted on it, and very reluctantly she went. We rode on until we came

to the street she had designated, and then she said she had made a mistake, it must be another one which she mentioned, in a different direction. We went there also ; and at length, finding that she would be detected, she said that her family must have moved that day,—they had talked of it ! But seeing me firm and determined either to keep her or go with her, she became very angry, and at last confessed that the whole story was false.”

“Where did she live ?”

“In a cellar in Ann Street. She had no father living, that we could find out ; and the mother was an abandoned woman, who supported herself by sending a boy and a girl out on such errands. I tried to have something done to rescue the children from this miserable life, but they actually moved somewhere, so that I lost the track of them.”

“How discouraging !” said Laura. “Did you meet with many such instances ?”

“Not precisely like this, of course, but I often found that I had been hasty or injudicious in giving ; and I learned to inquire and


look into cases, and endeavoured to be cautious and vigilant, as well as sympathetic in my efforts. We are responsible to God for the use we make of our means of charity. If we throw them away on unworthy objects, who are thus encouraged in idleness and vice, we not only do positive harm, but we deprive others of the benefit who really need that very aid."

"But would you have us try to help none but good people?"

"By no means. It is far more desirable to reform evil habits than to feed and clothe the body. And it is necessary often to relieve those whose vices have produced their misfortunes; but we must be very careful that our aid does not confirm them in those vices. We must do all that we can to induce self-help, and to keep them from wrong, which is the greatest of all misfortunes."

CHAPTER XIII.

LAURA'S COUSINS.

 ANY weeks had passed away under the pleasant roof of Mr. White, and Laura could hardly believe it possible that she had been absent from home so long. There was not more variety than in her own home, but the very regularity and the interest that filled every moment prevented time from ever hanging heavily. Already there was a perceptible difference in her habits of thought and action. Instead of following the first emotion, she had learned to consider whether others would be benefited by it, and whether she could complete what she commenced.

Formerly, her life was very much like the contents of her drawer, where half-a-dozen different pieces of work had been begun, but

were thrown together in confusion, because each was abandoned for the next new idea. Thus her days passed in a kind of busy idleness. Her enthusiasm had been all expended on the first attempt at an enterprise; but she now saw that right enthusiasm leads to the accomplishment of an object. Her zeal had been in taking the first step. Her friends showed theirs in pursuing the journey. She saw, too, that the pleasure of praise received, or of thinking oneself very kind and generous, was not the motive which influenced their conduct.

Susan and her brothers, Amos and Lawrence, had their plans of benevolence, but they involved labour and self-sacrifice. The two boys had a part of the garden, which they worked very industriously, and their father allowed them a certain sum for what they could raise. This money, which was their own, they spent as they thought best; and that year they had obtained enough together to purchase a Sunday-school library, to send to a needy district in a western city. Occasionally they received a

letter from the clergyman in that district; and these they welcomed with great pleasure.

One evening a gentleman who had been an early friend of Mr. White came to pass the night at his house. In the course of conversation he spoke of a trip he had lately taken to the western part of our country, and his surprise at the religious destitution which existed in most of our large towns. To the delight of the boys, he referred incidentally to the town of L——, which was not very far from the place to which their library had gone. They had looked out that locality on the map very carefully, you may be sure. They exchanged glances, as much as to say, "Perhaps he went to *our* place, and has visited *our* Sunday school;" but not wishing to speak of their own deeds, they did not ask. Presently, however, their father inquired of his friend if he knew Mr. C——, who was a minister in that part of the country.

"Oh yes, very well. He is doing a great deal, both publicly and privately, for the improvement of the people. He has several

Sunday schools in his vicinity. And he told me how much he had been cheered in his labours by the sympathy of Christian friends. Just a little before I met him he had received libraries for two destitute Sunday schools, and I was with him when one of them was distributed. You have no idea of the joy those books caused.

"You would smile to see them," he continued, turning round to the listening group. "I could not help wishing that many young persons who toss over books carelessly could be taught the value they have where privileges are fewer. One little girl, who stood near me when the library was distributed, was wrapping her book up in her pocket-handkerchief, as if she thought the air would injure it. And two brothers, who had one book for both, were just before me as I came out of the school-house, and I heard one begging the other to let him carry it. 'No; I want to keep it now, and you may bring it back next Sunday.' But as this did not satisfy his brother, he said, 'Well, you may carry it half way.' Oh, those books

are treasured as precious seeds in those waste places, I can assure you."

"Was this place near the town of L——?" asked Mr. White.

"Yes; only about twenty miles from it."

"It *is* our Sunday school," thought the boys; but they listened very attentively as the gentleman passed on to describe the beauty and fertility of those counties he had visited.

CHAPTER XIV.

PROMISES FULFILLED.

THE impression made upon Laura's mind, when little Robert Hervey's life was endangered by her thoughtless indulgence of her own idle wishes, had not left her; and she was frequently reminded by that "still small voice" which whispers truth to the soul, of the promise to be a Christian, which she had so repeatedly made, and her resolutions of amendment during those sorrowful days of his illness. When the danger had been removed, and her heart was filled with a sense of her heavenly Father's goodness to her, all undeserving as she was, then was the promise renewed again and again. But we are told, upon divine authority, not only that "the heart is desperately wicked," but that it is

"deceitful above all things;" and Laura's impulsive feelings and the temptations of life were combined to drive away all earnest impressions.

Mrs. White, who so fervently desired to see her a child of God, told her very frankly of her danger, even from those very qualities which she might most commend in herself; because, in relying on them, she turned away from the true Source of help. She prayed with her, and for her, and pointed out the readiness of Christ to receive those who seek him in penitence and faith. At times she was melted by a deep impression of divine love, and of her own guilt in having yielded no return from her heart. Then her sanguine feelings would hurry her into self-confidence and ardent plans in which she should have a prominent part in doing a great deal of good and becoming a distinguished Christian. These were followed by no peace of spirit, but rather by failures in her resolutions, even in the regulation of her own mind and heart. Then she sank into discouragement again.

"Oh, I speak and act so thoughtlessly! I have such strong faults that they will never be conquered. I shall never be a Christian. If I were only naturally good, like Susan, how easy it would be!"

"No, my dear," said Mrs. White; "you mistake in thinking so. There is a natural difference of temperament and character, so that the experience of no two persons can ever be precisely alike; but Susan has her faults and her struggles which you do not know. Her disposition is very different from yours, being inclined to obstinacy rather than to impulsiveness; but this does not render her Christian life 'easy.' No one is 'naturally good,' you know; for to be good is to love and serve God supremely, and no one does that naturally."

"I only meant that it was comparatively easy for some persons to be Christians."

"Even there I cannot agree with you, for every character has its own peculiar temptations and trials. But He who has promised to guide us can read every human thought, and

will give His strength where there is weakness; so that the impulsive and erring Peter, as well as the milder John, can be made to bear alike the image of Christ. It is 'the fruit of *the Spirit*' which 'is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.' "

Sometimes fear and sometimes hope predominated in Laura's mind; and this restlessness made her for a while very unhappy. But her friends sympathized with her, and gave her both affectionate counsel and the solitude she needed for self-examination and communion with God. Gradually, as the spiritual life was deepened in her soul, she thought and relied less on herself, and more on her divine Teacher. She looked unto Jesus, who is both "the Author and the Finisher" of all true faith; and firmness was imparted to the hitherto wavering purpose.

In the humble consecration of herself to the service of God, her warm and impulsive feelings found occupation for all their activity, and a sweet peace passed over the troubled waters of her spirit. While she strove by

prayer, and the careful perusal of the Scriptures, to find the true principles of action, she saw that the balance they gave did not extinguish, but chastened and directed enthusiasm.

The winter months had nearly passed, when it became necessary for Laura to return home to her own family, who had begun to be quite impatient to have her once more among them. Her uncle's household parted from her with much regret; but it was regret mingled with gratitude, that she now knew the blessing of being a loving child of God, and would return to exert a good influence upon others. Her cousins, Amos and Lawrence, however, could hardly be reconciled to lose Laura, who had entered with so much kindness and sympathy into all their plans.

"It was like having another sister, for her to stay with them, and made it just even with the two boys; doesn't it, Susan?"

"She is, indeed, like a sister to me," she said, "a darling sister, but they cannot give her up at home."

No, indeed, they cannot ; and let us rejoice that she returns to them with the added grace of Christian love, and with IMPULSES directed and elevated by PRINCIPLE.

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